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EASY, BREEZY, YEEZY SEASON 5

Kanye West's NYFW show was very chill. 12

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'DAY WITHOUT IMMIGRANTS'

Business owners, employees, schoolchildren plan a walkout to protest Trump administration's policies. 4

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US LAWMAKERS PUSH FOR ANSWERS ON RUSSIA TIES

1 Amid a deepening crisis over the relationship between President Donald Trump's aides and Russia, some Republicans issued their boldest challenge yet and vowed to get to the bottom of the matter, while Democrats demanded an independent probe. The New York Times reported that phone call records and intercepted calls showed members of Trump's presidential campaign and other Trump associates had repeated

contacts with senior Russian intelligence officials in the year before the Nov. 8 election. Republican Trump critics including Sens. John McCain and Lindsey Graham voiced fresh consternation, but comments by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker, who has been a Trump supporter, increased the pressure on the White House. REUTERS

MYSTERY WITNESS TO TESTIFY AGAINST DURST

2 Robert Durst returned to a Los Angeles courtroom on Wednesday to face a prosecution witness whose identity was being kept secret until taking the stand. Durst is charged with first-degree murder in the fatal shooting of a writer and longtime confidante of his, Susan Berman, in December 2000, and prosecutors say the witness fears his or her life may be put in danger by testifying. Berman was found slain in her Los Angeles home not long after police in New York had reopened an investigation into the disappearance and presumed killing of Durst's spouse, Kathleen, two decades earlier. Prosecutors said they suspect Durst killed Berman because of what she knew about his wife's unsolved demise in 1982. The judge has given approval for Wednesday's witness to testify well in advance of the actual trial. REUTERS

PUZDER WITHDRAWS AS LABOR DEPT. NOMINEE

3 Fast-food chain executive Andrew Puzder formally withdrew his name from consideration to be U.S. Secretary of Labor on Wednesday amid mounting concerns he could not win enough Republican support to get confirmed by the U.S. Senate. "After careful consideration and discussions with my family, I am withdrawing my nomination for Secretary of Labor," Puzder said in a statement. "While I won't be serving in the administration, I fully support the president and his highly qualified team." REUTERS

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

MEETING NETANYAHU, TRUMP BACKS AWAY FROM COMMITMENT TO PALESTINIAN STATE

5 President Donald Trump dropped a U.S. commitment to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a longstanding bedrock of Middle East policy, even as he urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to curb settlement construction. In the first face-to-face meeting between the two leaders since Trump's victory in the 2016 election, the Republican president backed away from a U.S. embrace of the eventual creation of a Palestinian state, upending a position taken by successive administrations and the international community. "I'm looking at two states and one state, and I like the one both parties like," Trump told a joint news conference with Netanyahu. "I can live with either one." REUTERS GETTY IMAGES

VERIZON CLOSE TO YAHOO DEAL

4 Verizon Communications Inc. is close to a revised deal to buy Yahoo Inc.'s core internet business for $250 million to $350 million less than the original agreed price of $4.83 billion, according to a source briefed on the matter. Since last year, Verizon had been trying to persuade Yahoo to amend the terms of the acquisition agreement to reflect the economic damage from two cyberattacks. A source told Reuters that the deal, which could come as soon as this week, will entail Verizon and Yahoo sharing the liability from potential lawsuits related to the data breaches. Another person familiar with the situation said the price cut was likely to be around $250 million, a figure that Bloomberg reported earlier on Wednesday. Verizon and Yahoo declined to comment. REUTERS

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RACHEL RACZKA, NATIONAL MUSIC EDITOR

Get ready to go au natural. With NYFW winding down, we looked at some of the most popular trends to hit the runway. When designers like Jason Wu and Ryan Roche played it cool, with clean, skin and sleek simple ponytails, Jonathan Simkhai and Christian Siriano got artsy with avant garde makeup techniques that are pretty much Pinterest-perfect. Check out all the trends in our story. **metro.us**

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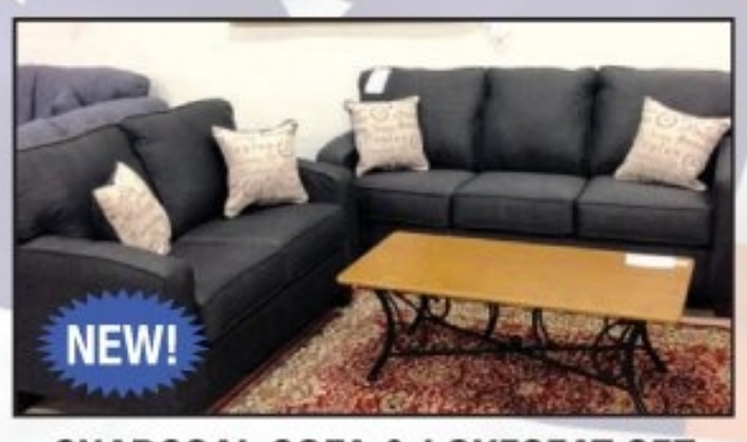

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Hundreds expected to walk off work in Philly on 'day without immigrants'

The move comes amid fears of large-scale immigration raids.

SAM NEWHOUSE
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Miguel Andrade and Maria Serna blocked the exit to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) building in Center City along with other immigrants and activists to demand an end to deportations of undocumented immigrants on Wednesday.
CHARLES MOSTOLLER | INSET: RIKARD LARMA

President Donald Trump's rise to the White House has been accompanied by increasingly harsh rhetoric about immigration.

In response, local immigrant rights activists have decided to give Philly a taste of what the world would be like if proponents of mass deportations had their way. They've planned a "Day without Immigrants" (Un Dia Sin Immigrante) protest on Thursday.

"What if a good chunk of Philadelphia society was gone in one day? This is what we're talking about," said Miguel Andrade, an organizer with Juntos, an immigrants' activist group that is coordinating the protest.

Immigrants will be "closing shops, not sending their children to school and not engaging in consumerism," Juntos said in a statement.

But a dip in economic activity isn't the purpose of the protest, they said.

"The point of this is not only to show what the effects on day-to-day life are going to be like, businesses and restaurants not being open, but really showing what mass deportations would look like," Andrade said. "This is your classmate, your neighbor, your coworker — and they could easily be gone in the blink of an eye."

The planned protest is one of several happening across the country Thursday. Similar walkouts are planned in such places as Washington, D.C.; Austin, Texas; and the Jersey Shore.

In Philadelphia, some top restaurateurs have voiced support for the walkout.

Stephen Starr, owner of Starr Restaurants, told Billy Penn he wouldn't punish any workers who participated in the walkout. "It's sad that it has come to this," he said. "They should not have to live in fear."

The Philadelphia Republican Party responded on Twitter to news of the planned walkout by stating, "We support legal immigration. We oppose illegal immigration."

That's a distinction Andrade rejected.

"No human being is illegal," he said. "People think you just get in line, fill out a form and come in the right way. But it's a long and arduous process that costs thousands of dollars and takes years."

Andrade isn't exactly sure how many people will participate in the protest, but said another walkout is already planned for May 1.

Mass raids: Fear or fiction?

The protest comes just days after immigration officers arrested more than 680 people around the country.

"This past weekend we saw large-scale raids happening across the country and are bracing for them to hit Philadelphia," Juntos said.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials said the arrests were part of regular operations.

But immigration activists from Juntos said they expect to see "more aggressive tactics from a federal agency that is now emboldened by the racist and xenophobic speech of Donald Trump."

While such raids have not yet been reported in Philadelphia, organizers said they have been receiving panicked texts and calls from immigrants around the city who fear such raids could take place.

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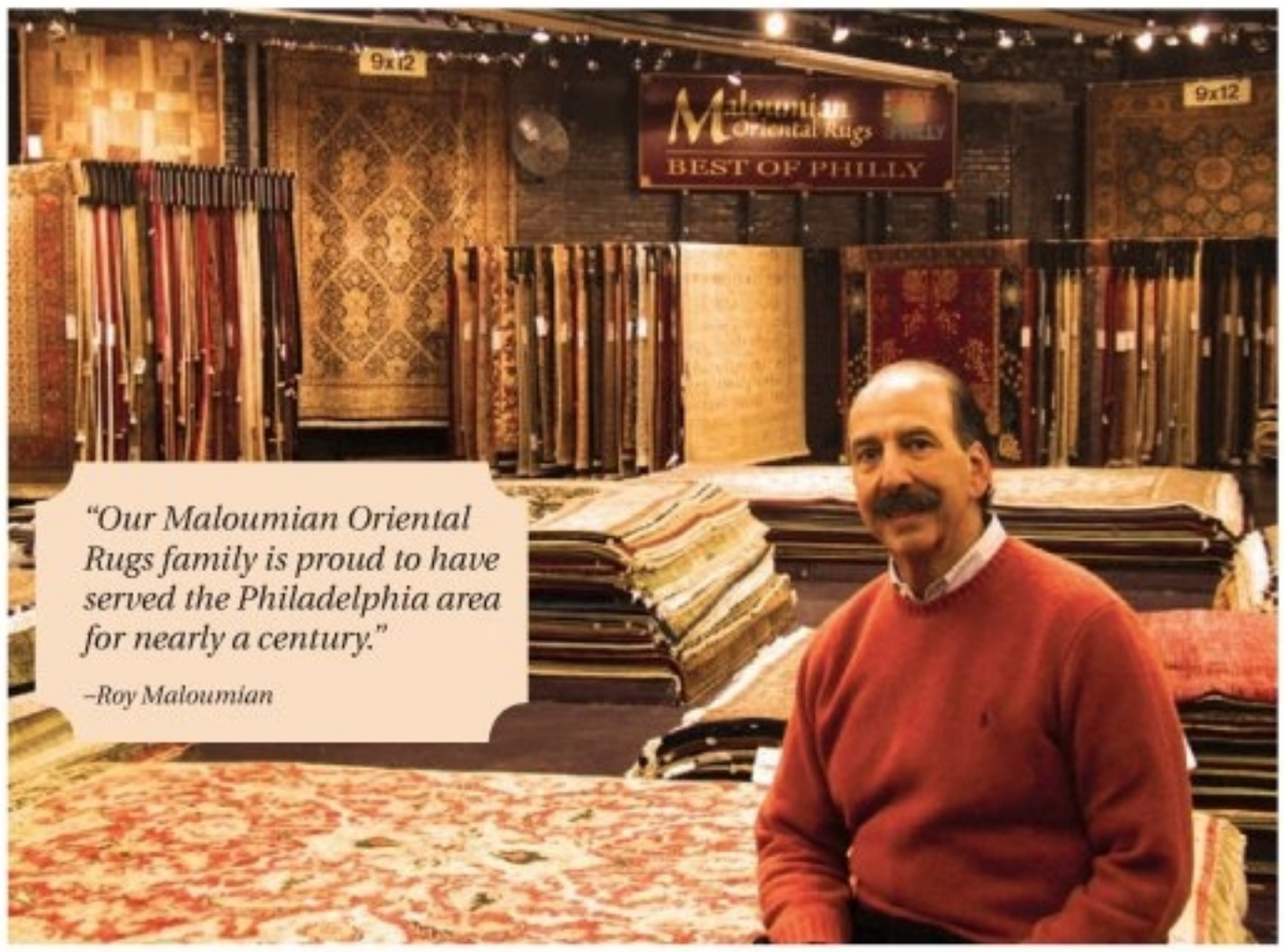
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At Harvard, hip-hop is getting its place in history

The "Classic Crates" project will archive 200 of the most influential hip-hop albums.

KRISTIN TOUSSAINT
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Within Harvard's hallowed halls, hip-hop music is being recognized as the art form its admirers have long known it to be.

Harvard researchers are in the process of archiving 200 of the most significant hip-hop albums as part of a project called Classic Crates.

The work will involve assembling and documenting the history of each album, including digital and vinyl recordings, along with information on sample tracks used in some songs and even the liner notes and other information that went into its creation.

Each package will help explain the influence and impact that album has had.

The first four albums in the archives include a tour through 1990s hip-hop along with a representation from the recent past. They are: A Tribe Called Quest's "The Low End Theory" from 1991; Nas' "Illmatic," which appeared three years later; Lauryn Hill's breakout album, "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" from 1998; and Kendrick Lamar's "To Pimp a Butterfly," from 2015.

HIPHOPARCHIVE.COM

"I think the recognition of hip-hop as a true American artform is something that is not necessarily widely recognized," said Brionna Atkins, a staff member at Harvard's Hiphop Archive & Research Institute. That, she said, is "really a central act of the Classic Crates project … That it has a significant cultural presence — not just currently, but also how it connects to the past.

The project is on firm ground, with a 2015 study published in the academic journal Royal Society Open Science, counting hip-hop as the most important music genre in our last half-century.

Patrick Douthit, a Harvard fellow, college lecturer and music producer known as 9th Wonder, is the lead curator for the entire 200-album project.

He's working directly alongside Marcyliena Morgan, Harvard professor and director of the Hiphop Archive and Peter Laurence from the school's Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library, along with peers in the hip-hop community and Harvard researchers.

Atkins, 22, is a recent Harvard graduate and media coordinator at the Hiphop Archive. She helps lead the undergraduate research associates, who work directly on the Classic Crates project by filling out the background work that goes into each archival package.

It's a lot of work, Atkins admitted. The archival packages include earlier recorded versions of songs, details on every sample, collected articles and reviews of the albums, music videos and more. But, she added, it's worth it to highlight the importance of these musical marvels.

The archived albums aren't released in order of importance and are not ranked, the staff said, but chosen instead for their overall significance to the form.

Beginning this year, Classic Crates will announce 10 archived albums each year. This year's picks are expected in the fall.

Impressions on a masterpiece

A Tribe Called Quest's "The Low End Theory" is one of the four albums first archived in Harvard's Classic Crates project.

Brionna Atkins, a staffer at the school's Hiphop Archive & Research Institute, cited the album's jazz sampling as "significant." She added adding it can be "traced later to other artists using these techniques and drawing inspiration." One prominent sample on the album uses a Miles Davis track.

"So there's these samples that are from 1980s, 1970s, 1960s that also reference another history and another period," in addition to the period that A Tribe Called Quest represents, Atkins said.

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Lower Merion HS basketball players take stand against bigotry

A player on the Lower Merion Aces in the team's new warmup shirts. COURTESTY OF JOSH VERLIN/CITYOFBASKETBALLLOVE.COM

The team is voicing its support for Muslims and refugees through T-shirts they created.

SAM NEWHOUSE
@scnewhouse
sam.newhouse@metro.us

High school students on the Lower Merion High School boys basketball team have made a distinctive statement with their team's new warmup T-shirts.

"I am a Muslim. I am a refugee. I am an immigrant. I am an American. I am an Ace," read the new shirts, created by the players on the Lower Merion Aces.

The players came up with the idea for the shirts themselves, the school district said.

"This is all them," said school district spokesman Douglas Young. "We support and respect our students' right to express themselves."

In a statement released by the students, they explain the intention behind the shirts, which come as President Trump continues a legal battle in court to enact a ban on travelers and refugees from seven mostly Muslim nations from entering the U.S.

"What's beautiful about America is that everyone is different," the statement from the players said, before noting that some players have chosen in recent weeks to sit during the national anthem. "That is OK. We are free to disagree and have different points of view."

But the team said it decided to make a unified statement in support of immigrants, refugees and Muslims.

"As a team we believe in fighting for the rights of all — protecting, defending and giving voice to those who feel marginalized, who live in fear, and who face injustice. We recently met and decided that the best way to express our views on what concerns us about what's happening in the world is to show a unified front and to wear a T-shirt with a message."

After Lower Merion triumphed Tuesday night over Strath Haven, 82-60, winning the Central League championship, players explained the shirts to sports blog CityofBasketballLove.com.

"We had to come together as a team to find a way to spread the message to everybody without them having to go through the coaches to know what's going on with us," said senior Najja Walker-X, who helped design the shirts.

The shirts are also being sold for $10 each, with all proceeds going to the ACLU.

"We had to come together as a team to find a way to spread the message to everybody without them having to go through the coaches to know what's going on with us,"

Najja Walker-X

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Uber drivers see a passenger's name before accepting their fare request, which a Harvard study shows can lead to racial bias. FILE PHOTO

Discrimination still rampant in sharing economy, but researchers are hopeful it will be fixed

By recognizing that racial bias occurs on platforms like Lyft and Airbnb, new startups can work on ways to stop it.

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The sharing economy clearly has its benefits, as the large success of services like Uber, Lyft and Airbnb show, but it also bears a shameful blemish: documented discrimination.

Airbnb guests with "distinctively African-American names" are 16 percent less likely to be accepted by a host as an identical guest with a white-sounding name, according to a Harvard Business School study published in September.

A month later, MIT released a study which found that Uber drivers in Boston were more than twice as likely to cancel rides for passengers with "African-American-sounding" names, compared to stereotypical "white-sounding" names.

The good news, though, is that these companies seem eager to right their wrongs.

Airbnb quickly adopted new rules to fight discrimination by its hosts and launched a new ad campaign during the Super Bowl called #WeAccept. Lyft and Uber also immediately reached out to the MIT researchers, said Chris Knittel, one of the study's authors and an MIT Sloan professor.

Knittel spoke during an MIT Sloan Expert Series on Wednesday about their next steps.

"We have continued conversations with [Uber and Lyft], and we're trying to design follow-up studies to minimize the amount of discrimination occurring," he said. "We're not talking specifics yet, but I can say that the companies understand our research and want to be better."

While no cancellation effect was found by researchers with Lyft in Boston, Knittel noted this does not mean there was no discrimination. Lyft drivers see a user's name before they accept the ride, he said, meaning they can skip a person altogether rather than canceling after they accept the ride. Uber's platform shows a user's name only after the driver accepts the ride.

When asked how sharing economy startups can better reduce racial bias, Knittel said that the fact that this research exists is already helpful.

"First is to be aware of this, and I think Uber, Lyft and Airbnb maybe were caught off guard with the amount of discrimination taking place," he said.

"The research we performed gives new startups a head start on knowing that this is an issue and designing platforms by thinking of ways to limit discrimination."

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For community in dam's shadow, troubles go back decades

Weeks of winter storms triggered the near collapse of two of the dam's spillways this past week and temporary evacuation of nearly 190,000 residents.

For nearly 50 years, the Oroville Dam has provided a water lifeline to residents across the state of California. But for the community in its shadow, the dam has been a source of contention and legal battles.

Weeks of winter storms triggered the near collapse of two of the dam's spillways this past week and temporary evacuation of nearly 190,000 residents.

The recent crisis also brought to the surface lingering and looming problems faced by the local community.

Butte County and green groups have fought the relicensing of the Oroville Dam for more than a decade. They argue federal regulators and the courts should require the state to better fortify the emergency spillway, to reimburse the county for dam-related costs, and to more carefully examine the effects of climate change on the dam.

Oroville's reservoir plays a vital role in capturing water from California's rainy, mountainous north and distributing it to agricultural lands, industrial tracts and homes from the Bay Area to Southern California. But the community downstream says the benefits were not returned to Butte County.

In 2005, Butte County filed a motion with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which licenses the dam, to intervene in the state's application to grant a new 50-year license.

"For many years the costs to provide services to the project have outweighed the tourism benefits," the county argued at the time. The dam's recreation facilities had become "a magnet for crime, vandalism, trash dumping" that the county regularly had to police and clean up.

The nation's tallest dam created a job boom for the region during its construction in the 1960s. But once the project was completed, unemployment spiked and new homes were abandoned.

In the decades since, Butte County argued it lost $267 million in potential taxes on the now-submerged land under reservoir. The county estimated it spends $4.8 million annually on expenses related to the dam. The state's Department of Water Resources, which operates the dam, calculated the county's losses were less, but still reached over $500,000 annually, according to a 2007 environmental study.

Conservation groups Friends of the River and the Sierra Club also raised issues, requesting that the dam's relicensing be contingent on stronger fortification of the emergency spillway — which nearly failed this week.

"We were told repeatedly that the spillways and the dam were all just fine," said Friends of the River's Executive Director Eric Wesselman.

FERC consultants dismissed concerns about the emergency spillway in a 2006 memo. But Monday, the federal agency requested an independent "forensic analysis to determine both the cause of the spillway failure and whether it could occur again."

FERC spokeswoman Celeste Miller would not say how the damaged spillways impacted the state's application to relicense the dam.

In 2008, Butte County also sued the state's Department of Water Resources, accusing it of avoiding a rigorous assessment of the effects of climate change on the dam.

REUTERS

The Oroville Dam's main spillway on Feb. 13. ALL PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

A sign is seen submerged by flowing water near Oroville, California. GETTY IMAGES

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Trump blasts 'criminal' leaks by intelligence agencies, calls Flynn 'wonderful'

President Donald Trump on Wednesday assailed what he said were illegal and "criminal" leaks from U.S. intelligence agencies in the controversy over contacts with Russian officials that forced his national security adviser Michael Flynn to resign.

Speaking at a joint news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump called Flynn a "wonderful man" and added: "I think it's very, very unfair what's happened to General Flynn, the way he was treated, and the documents and papers that were illegally, I stress that, illegally leaked." REUTERS

Michael Flynn
GETTY IMAGES

"I think it's very, very unfair what's happened to General Flynn, the way he was treated, and the documents and papers that were illegally, I stress that, illegally leaked."

President Donald Trump

FLYNN'S POST

Sources: Trump offers national security adviser post to Vice Admiral Harward

The Trump administration has offered the job of White House national security adviser, vacated by former U.S. intelligence official Michael Flynn, to Vice Admiral Robert Harward, said two U.S. officials familiar with the matter.

It was not immediately clear if Harward, a former deputy commander of U.S. Central Command who has Navy SEAL combat experience, had accepted the offer, according to sources.

Flynn resigned on Monday after revelations that he had discussed U.S. sanctions on Russia with the Russian ambassador to the United States before President Donald Trump took office.

Losing his national security adviser so soon after taking office is an embarrassment for the new Republican president, who has made national security a top priority.

Harward, a Rhode Island native who went to school in Tehran before the Shah was toppled in 1979, did a tour on the National Security Council under former Republican President George W. Bush, working on counterterrorism. He also has combat experience on SEAL teams and served in Iraq and Afghanistan. REUTERS

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India launches record 104 satellites at one go

People watch the launch of a rocket carrying weather satellites last year in Sriharikota, in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. GETTY

India successfully launched 104 satellites in a single mission Wednesday, setting what its space agency says is a world record of launching the most satellites at one go.

Of the 104, 101 are foreign satellites to serve international customers as the South Asian nation seeks a bigger share of the $300 billion global space industry.

"This is a great moment for each and every one of us. Today we have created history," said project director B. Jayakumar.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted his congratulations on the launch conducted by the state-run Indian Space Research Organization that went off smoothly and was carried live on national TV news channels.

"This remarkable feat by ISRO is yet another proud moment for our space scientific community and the nation," he said. "India salutes our scientists."

Modi is bullish on India's space program and has repeatedly praised the efforts of scientists who three years ago pulled off a low-cost mission to send a probe to orbit Mars that succeeded at the first attempt.

ISRO's low prices attracted international customers to launch 75 satellites last year from Sriharikota in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

The launch of PSLV-C37 in a single payload, including the Cartosat-2 series and 103 co-passenger satellites, together weighed over 1,433 pounds.

Out of 101 nano satellites, 96 were from the United States and one each from Israel, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates. REUTERS

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Yeezy Season 5 was super lowkey

While Yeezy Season 4 was disastrous, with attendees marooned on Roosevelt Island for hours and models actually fainting from the heat, this year's affair was pretty low-maintenance. Either Kanye learned from that mess, or he's taking it easy since his hospitalization. Held at Chelsea's Pier 59, the show only began 25 minutes late and barely lasted a half-hour. The looks featured baggy, oversized sweatshirts, over-the-knee snakeskin boots and the new Yeezy Boost Runners. In one political-tinged moment, Halima Aden, a Somali-American model, made her NYFW debut wearing a hijab and a long fur coat. Kanye West did not even come out to take a bow at the end. See you next season!

KATE MOONEY

the word

RACHAEL CLEMMONS
rachael.clemmons@metro.us

Kesha releases emails that prove Dr. Luke is evil

Kesha has released emails she claims were sent to her by real-life villain Dr. Luke, and they are pretty terrifying.

Page Six has the scoop on the emails, which are from 2012. First, in an exchange between Dr. Luke and Kesha's manager, Monica Cornia, regarding Kesha's single "We R Who We R," Dr. Luke says "I don't give a s—t what you want. If you were smart, you would go in and sing it. Also in the exchange, the 43-year old producer comments about Kesha's weight, calling her a "fat f—king refrigerator," and insisted top songwriters didn't want to give Kesha songs because of her weight.

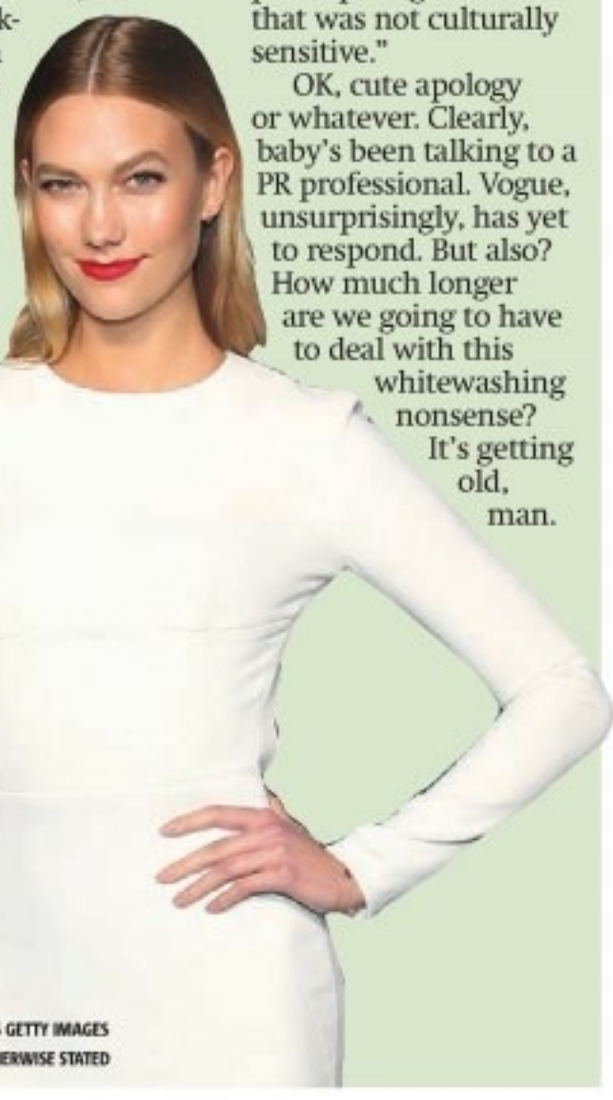
Here's hoping that these emails help Kesha's long nightmare come to an end.

Karlie Kloss is really sorry for posing as a geisha

When you think about the word "diversity," what comes to mind? A white lady dressed up as a geisha? No? That's weird. Because in an attempt to celebrate diversity, Vogue prominently featured Karlie Kloss shot in Japan and styled as, that's right, a geisha. The tone-deaf spread has everything: a sumo wrestler; Kloss with a long black weave tumbling effortlessly down her back; she's even walking down the stairs of a tea house... dressed as a geisha.

The Cut notes that Vogue has a sordid history of publishing culturally insensitive fashion editorials, but it kind of seems like they could have had a better understanding of the word diversity and what it actually encompasses. After the blowback, the 24-year-old model tweeted an apology, writing, "These images appropriate a culture that is not my own and I am truly sorry for participating in a shoot that was not culturally sensitive."

OK, cute apology or whatever. Clearly, baby's been talking to a PR professional. Vogue, unsurprisingly, has yet to respond. But also? How much longer are we going to have to deal with this whitewashing nonsense? It's getting old, man.



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Dane DeHaan likes his downtime to be boring

The star of "A Cure for Wellness" wanted to play a character you wouldn't mind seeing beat up.

MATT PRIGGE
@mattprigge
matt.prigge@metro.us

Dane DeHaan plays a stressed-out businessman who finds himself in a creepy European spa that houses a number of freaky secrets in "A Cure for Wellness." TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

In "A Cure for Wellness," Dane DeHaan gets locked in a sensory deprivation tank with eels. He gets in a car accident. The villain performs crazy dental surgery on him. It's all in a day's work, says the actor, of "The Place Beyond the Pines" and "Chronicle." So far DeHaan, 31, has mixed it up, making serious dramas and outlandish blockbusters. In "A Cure for Wellness," he plays Lockhart, a cynical businessman who slowly uncovers a bizarre conspiracy at a creepy spa in the Swiss Alps.

GETTY IMAGES

One thing that must have kept this film interesting for you is that your character is kind of a jerk. And he's our hero.
I think who Lockhart is in the beginning of the movie isn't necessarily the most likable person. But if he was too likable, you'd just feel bad for him the entire time. I wanted to create a guy you wanted to get a beer with, but you wouldn't mind seeing him get punched in the face.

We place too much value on likable protagonists.
Likable protagonists can be pretty overrated. [Laughs] There's a world for the likable protagonist, but you're challenged more as an audience when you have a more complicated person.

I always get irritated when people say, "Well, I just didn't care for the hero."
"I just didn't want to have dinner with them." Well, you weren't having dinner with them. [Laughs]

The scene where they perform experimental dentistry on you is one of many scenes that looks like it was intense.
That was pretty freaky: There's a drill coming towards my face and I couldn't move. There were parts of the car accident that were pretty scary. They had a rig where the car was basically on a rotisserie, and it was flipping the car around.

Mixing it up

Films like this are a big departure from the dramas you've done, like "The Place Beyond the Pines."
If you did just one thing, you'd only be good at that one thing. It's fun to do different things, to be challenged in different ways, flex all the muscles. That's one of the things that's fun about my job.

You do have a fun job.
It's really fun, for sure. I'm sure your life when you're not working is not this fun. My life is so exciting when I'm working that I almost crave the boring when I'm home. I just want to be on a couch, chilling out with my family. I love doing manual labor: chopping wood, laying stones — very simple tasks, where I'm as boring and off-the-grid as possible.

You live the opposite life of most people.
I get to do so many exciting things. "What did you do at work today?" "I was in a sensory deprivation tank with eels."

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Deborah Cox's 'Moment in Time'

The singer makes her mark in the stage adaptation of "The Bodyguard."

A.D. AMOROSI
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Since the mid-1990s, Deborah Cox has maintained a multifaceted career as a singer of sleek soul-pop hits and as an actress on Broadway's musical stage. There, smash R&B singles such as "Sentimental" and "We Can't Be Friends" go hand in hand with success in musicals "Aida" and "Jekyll & Hyde." She was also a friend and labelmate of the late Whitney Houston, whose role in the 1992 cinematic romantic thriller "The Bodyguard" Cox steps into as its touring theater production hits the Academy of Music. Sure, you'll hear Houston's hits like "One Moment in Time" and "I Will Always Love You," but expect Cox to tenderly make them her own.

Deborah Cox as 'Rachel Marron' and Judson Mills as 'Frank Farmer'

You always wrote most of your own songs, something your contemporaries couldn't or wouldn't do. Why was that important?

I wanted to make sure "Deborah Cox's voice" was in each song, in some way. Even if it was a song that I didn't write, I tweaked it enough to make it mine. It's been important for me to have that liberty.

Serious as you are, was it totally cool finding your songs remixed and huge within the dance music community?

It happened organically, so it was nice. The remixes clicked and had their own identities. They really began to resonate within the gay community. They did their own thing.

You were laudably close to legendary music mogul Clive Davis, who signed you and made you his protege. Only Whitney Houston held such favor with Clive. Did you feel the pressure?

We're still close, with him supportive of all I've done on Broadway. He un-

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Deborah Cox performs in "The Bodyguard" beginning Feb. 21. JALL PHOTOS BY JOAN MARCUS

derstood I had a musical theater background before I made records and wanted me to develop all my strengths. Under his tutelage, he allowed me to be a well-rounded artist who never had to stoop to do things like take off my clothes or be image-focused. He's a good man.

Whitney was also a pal, a labelmate, maybe a competitor?
Never competition. I came in the biz after she was long established. When I got to Arista, a friendship blossomed. Being labelmates with other females is a relationship to navigate gingerly. That's irked me since my start — that people surmise we would be at each other's throats. She was always supportive, and when we finally did our duet, "Same Script, Different Cast," our relationship came full circle.

How did the theater version of her "Bodyguard" film come your way?
When I first heard about it, Whitney was still with us. Clive mentioned it. He must have been putting that bug in my ear. In 2011, they developed it in the U.K., and when they decided to bring it to the U.S., they contacted me. I saw that the songs told a story, that the musical was also a thriller, suspenseful and sexy, and that my character was complex, not one-dimensional. That's a lot of positives.

Sensual as it is, it must be important for you to find chemistry with your bodyguard, Judson Mills.
He's definitely the biggest piece of the puzzle. The bodyguard has to have strength, inner life and the actor has to have the chops to pull that off as he's driving this story. From the first rehearsal, Judson and I hit it off well.

"The Bodyguard" runs from Tuesday, Feb. 21 at 7:30 p.m. until Sunday, Feb. 26 at 6:30 p.m. at the Academy of Music, 240 S. Broad St. Tickets start at $20. 215-893-1999, kimmelcenter.org

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Cupid's Undie Run

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MUSIC

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Mardi Gras Parade on South Street

Join Philly-based Mardi Gras band The Wild Bohemians for their 33rd annual NOLA-themed pub crawl along South Street. The band of revelers dress in outlandish costumes and play music as they make their way from bar to bar. The procession begins at Fat Tuesday's and carries on to pubs like Downey's, Paddy Whacks, O'Neals and Copabanana.

Feb. 19, 1-6 p.m.
Fat Tuesday's
431 South St.
Pay as you go
facebook.com/The-Wild-Bohemians

PARKS

Historic Whitesbog and Pine Barrens Hike

As part of an ongoing series that explores "magical and often unseen places in Philadelphia's parks and surrounding countryside," Philadelphia Parks Alliance takes hikers to the Pine Barrens to explore the 3,000 acres comprising Whitesbog Village. The day begins with a hearty breakfast before setting out to wander through Whitesbog's vibrant cranberry bogs and dense forest. Be sure to pack a picnic.

Feb. 18, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.
Powelton Village (starting point), Address revealed after registration, $30
philaparks.org

The Love Stories of Woodford Mansion

If you're still feeling amorous the weekend after Valentine's Day, take a sojourn to Fairmount Park's historic Woodford Mansion for a tour with a romantic twist. Actors dressed in period costumes will impart love stories centered around the people who lived in the storied home, like Alexander Barclay and Ann Hickman, whose portraits still hang in the front hall.

Feb. 16-19, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Woodford Mansion
33rd Street and Dauphin Drive
$8, woodfordmansion.org

ARTS

BalletX Winter Series 2017

This is the last weekend of BalletX's Winter Series, which brings to the stage a trio of fresh and innovative new dance works like celebrated Norwegian choreographer Jo Stromgren's American folk-music-inspired "The Letter," and the East Coast premiere of co-founder Matthew Neenan's "Credo," which earned major thumbs up from The New York Times when it showed at the 2016 Vail International Dance Festival.

Through Feb. 19
The Wilma Theater, 265 S. Broad St. $25-$45, balletx.org

Party like a Mummer for Mardis Gras. J. FUSCO FOR VISIT PHILADELPHIA

Mardi Gras

For a taste of Bourbon Street a little closer to home, the Mummers hit Main Street in Manayunk for their annual Mardi Gras Parade. Sixteen ensembles from The String Band Association promise a day of lively music, livelier costumes and shiny beads galore. Stick around after the parade for a family-friendly carnival featuring face painting, extra performances, and food and drink.

Mummers Mardi Gras Parade
Feb. 18, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
Main Street in Manayunk
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mummersmardigras.com

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HOT plate

Yemenite chicken pot pie at Rooster Soup Company

Rooster Soup Company is a welcome addition to Sansom Street — serving up wholesome comfort food like soups, sandwiches and pie for a bargain. The upscale diner also has a charitable component, donating 100 percent of all profits to Broad Street Ministry Hospitality Collaborative.

Jennifer Logue eats her way through Philly

jennifer.logue@metro.us

Knowing that I could give back simply by eating lunch here was incentive enough to give this place a shot. But would the food be any good?

During the lunch rush, the place was packed to the rafters — I was lucky to get a seat at the counter. Despite opening just two weeks ago, Rooster Soup Company already has a loyal following.

"Everything is good here," a server comments to me as I peruse the menu. It was tough to decide on something because every plate that passed me looked incredible. But then the gentleman to my left sold me on the Yemenite chicken pot pie.

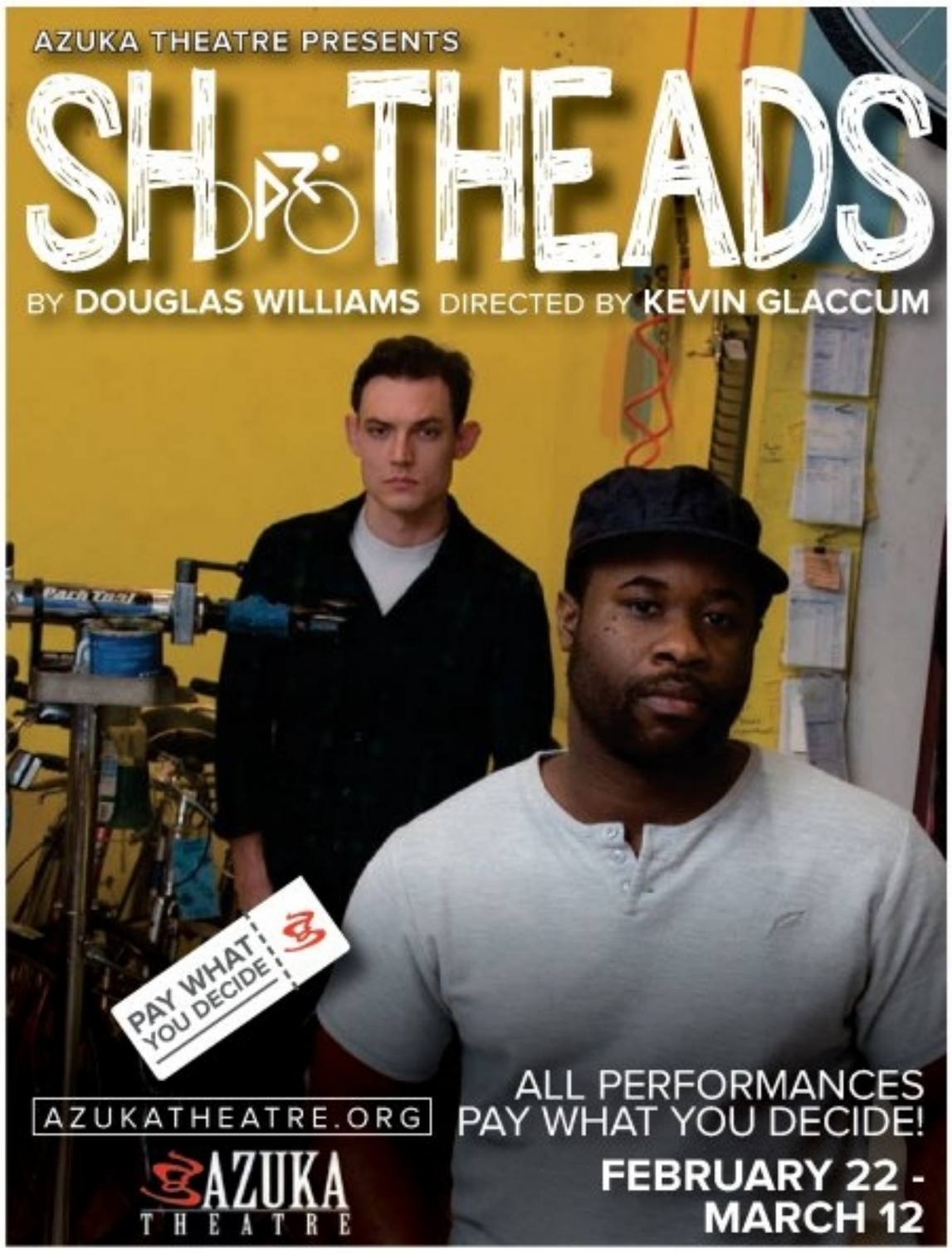
I've always loved the idea of pot pie but as a kid, I only got to experience the frozen variety. Rooster Soup Company actually makes them from scratch — with juicy pieces of real chicken rather those rubbery cubes. (Frozen-pot-pie people: you know what I'm talking about.)

Arriving on a hefty stoneware plate, the pie was the perfect size for lunch — large enough to satiate you minus the dreaded food coma. The dough was perfectly crisp on the outside yet still retained a chewy texture.

Truly a thing of beauty, I felt guilty digging in, but after taking a bite the feeling was quickly forgotten. The pie's center had a delicious, earthy taste, thanks to the dark meat chicken and use of hawaij (a Yemeni ground spice) as a seasoning. Also packed with veggies, the pie's leeks, peas and fingerling potatoes held up nicely against the complex creamy sauce.

Overall, the Yemenite chicken pot pie strikes a wonderful balance between Middle Eastern flavors and classic American comfort food. After eating this, it is safe to say I will never eat a frozen pot pie again.

The Yemenite chicken pot pie is truly a thing of beauty. MICHAEL PERSICO



Vacation high

The Denver 420 Rally is the world's largest celebration of cannabis culture; at left, a pot-laced dinner party in Washington state. AFP

Want to take a *really* relaxing trip? Here are your recreational pot destinations.

Fodor's Travel

Colorado

The very first state to legalize recreational marijuana (on Jan. 1, 2014) accumulated more than $70 million in tax revenue in its first year — and already expanded its laws. So not only can anyone in Colorado buy pot, businesses will soon be able to create "cannabis consumption areas" where customers will be allowed smoke up. For now, tourists over the age of 21 can buy up to a quarter-ounce of weed and smoke in private areas such as homes, social clubs, "420-friendly" hotels or by riding in a cannabis tour bus.

Washington

Since July 2014, the Evergreen State has allowed recreational cannabis sales of up to an ounce to locals and tourists alike (aged 21 and up). For non-smokable forms, you can buy up to 16 ounces of marijuana-infused edibles or 72 ounces of beverages. It's only legal to smoke in private areas, and you could face a small fine for smoking on the street.

Alaska

Alaskans and tourists have legally lit up since February 2015, though its first retail dispensary, Herbal Outfitters in Valdez, only opened its doors last October. Now adults 21 and up can buy as much as an ounce for recreational use.

Nevada

Las Vegas joined the legal weed party in 2016. As of Jan. 1, adults 21 and over can possess up to an ounce of cannabis concentrates, though the first pot dispensaries won't open until 2018.

Oregon

In 2014, voters approved recreational pot use in Oregon. Today, the state has as many marijuana dispensaries as Starbucks and McDonald's outposts combined. Tourists (over 21) can choose from a wide array of consumer-friendly pot shops, where "budtenders" relay all the salient details about each strain, edible, beverage or concentrate — though it must be consumed in private.

California

The first state to legalize medical marijuana back in 1996 didn't join the recreational-use party until 2016. And tourists will have to wait until 2018 to actually buy it, when the first retail licenses are issued. If you have a friend who lives there, they can give you up to an ounce.

Massachusetts

As of mid-December, purchase and possession of up to an ounce of weed is legal. But legislators are still tweaking regulations that may alter some of the 2016 ballot-approved initiative, like changing the tax rate for marijuana sales and raising the legal age from 21 to 25. For now, retail dispensaries are still expected to start opening in 2018.

Maine

Voters approved recreational cannabis in 2016; the new law allows individual possession of up to 2.5 ounces of marijuana, which is more than double the limit in most states. While possession and consumption by adults are legal, licensed dispensaries likely won't open doors until well into 2018.

Washington, D.C.

D.C. voters legalized recreational marijuana in 2014, but it's tricky: In the city limits, it's legal to possess up to 2 ounces, but technically you can't buy or sell it — you have to find someone to give you up to an ounce.

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Royal Caribbean — 7-Day Caribbean $590* pp — Ocean View Fr $641* pp — Taxes & fees $152.24pp — Balcony Fr $686* pp
Celebrity Cruises — 7-Day Alaska $689* pp — Ocean View Fr $949* pp — Taxes & fees $191.77pp — Balcony Fr $1339* pp
Princess Cruises — 7-Day Alaska $784* pp — Ocean View Fr $834* pp — Balcony Fr $1319* pp
NORWEGIAN — 10-Day Caribbean $869* pp — Ocean View Fr $929* pp — Balcony Fr $1179* pp
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NORWEGIAN — 11-Day Europe $799* pp — Ocean View Fr $899* pp — Balcony Fr $1219* pp
Celebrity Cruises — 10-Day Europe $834* pp — Ocean View Fr $1484* pp — Taxes & fees $152.22pp — Balcony Fr $1734* pp
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NORWEGIAN — 7-Day U.S/Canada $529* pp — Ocean View Fr $649* pp — Balcony Fr $949* pp
Royal Caribbean — 7-Day U.S/Canada $599* pp — Ocean View Fr $780* pp — Taxes & fees $154.91pp — Balcony Fr $1089* pp
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Preseason, position battles heat up as Union continue to prep for 2017 season

Will the Union be able to make a deeper run in next year's playoffs?

JEFF MCMENAMIN
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sports@metro.us

Will offensive specialist C.J. Sapong be a starter in 2017? GETTY IMAGES

Valentine's Day marked the beginning of the Union's 2017 season as the team boarded a plane headed to Clearwater, Florida, where the Union will face off in their first preseason matchup against the NASL's Tampa Bay Rowdies on Saturday.

"It's an exciting time," Union manager Jim Curtin said. "It's good to get into warm weather and get onto good fields that aren't frozen. Everyone's excited and we're really optimistic about this year. We got a taste of the playoffs last year and the guys are hungry for more."

The Union are heading into this season with quite possibly the deepest team they've had in the organization's nine-year history. With position battles at nearly every position, some analysts believe that the team's second unit this season will be better than some of the team's starting lineups in years past.

One position battle to watch throughout the year will be between the Union's third leading goal-scorer last season, C.J. Sapong, and newly inked international striker Jay Simpson, an Arsenal product. As of now, Curtin hasn't made up his mind in terms of who will see the majority of the minutes up top.

"We'll see, it's still to be determined," Curtin said, regarding the minutes battle. "It's a work in progress. C.J.'s a guy who has played on championship teams out wide, so he's capable. There will be healthy competition just like there is at all our spots right now."

In a 1-0 friendly loss to the Chicago Fire last week, Simpson played 62 minutes and showed flashes of the potential playmaker he can be for this team. Where Sapong oftentimes had trouble finding separation at the line last season, Simpson was open on several occasions when the Union pushed forward. It was a solid debut by the striker who is excited to show his worth in the lineup.

"I'm happy to play in any system that benefits the team," Simpson said. "I'm over here now and I'm going to get a chance to work on the shape and get a feel for it. It's a system I've played before, not so often, but I've played it before. They made the playoffs last year so I'm excited to come in and try to fight for my place."

Following Saturday night's 7:30 matchup, the Union will face the Montreal Impact and D.C. United next week to wrap up their preseason slate before they kick off the regular season on March 5 against the Vancouver Whitecaps.

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A LOVE STORY

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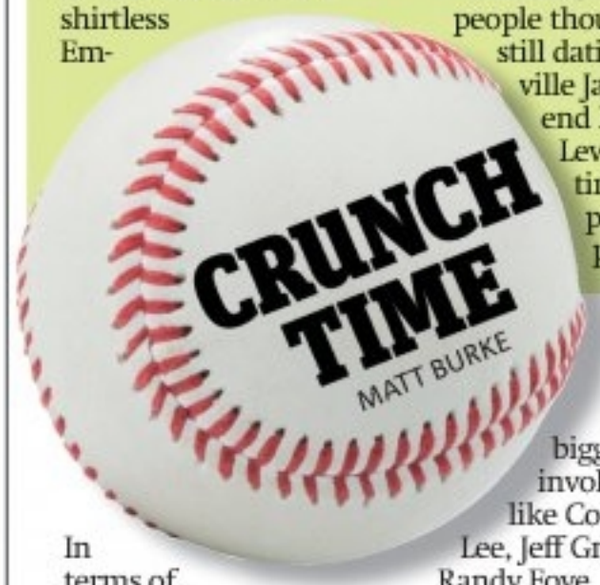
Joel Embiid is the most interesting man in the NBA today.

Here's the latest Bill Brasky-like Embiid story:

On Valentine's Day, WAGS star Olivia Pierson (pictured) posted an Instagram shot of herself in bed with a shirtless Embiid with a caption that read: "Happy Valentines Day to this hunk. Thank you for being you. I'm so proud of you. You are the most loyal person to me in this crazy life. And to me that's priceless. #ShipDocked"

Pierson, who most people thought was still dating Jacksonville Jaguars tight end Marcedes Lewis at the time of the post, was pretty much rejected by Embiid on social media as the online-savvy Sixers center reposted the picture with "#FAKE NEWS" plastered on it.



DEADLINE DUDS

In terms of trade-deadline excitement, baseball has surpassed basketball in recent years. There was plenty of buzz heading into last February's NBA deadline but the day came and went with a whimper as the biggest moves involved names like Courtney Lee, Jeff Green and Randy Foye.

There's plenty of superstar swap speculation this year, of course, with the Knicks' Carmelo Anthony, Chicago's Jimmy Butler and Indiana's Paul George all being mentioned in trade rumors on the daily.

If I had to wager today, though, I'd put good money on none of the above being dealt.

These days, the biggest NBA trades typically transpire during the summer months when there's more time to think things through.

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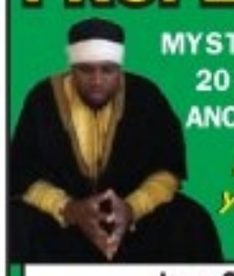

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LEGAL NOTICES

City of Philadelphia Public Hearing Notice

The **Committee on Fiscal Stability and Intergovernmental Cooperation** of the Council of the City of Philadelphia will hold a Public Hearing on **Monday, February 27, 2017**, at **1:00 PM**, in **Room 400, City Hall**, to hear testimony on the following item:

170038 Resolution authorizing the Committee on Fiscal Stability and Intergovernmental Cooperation to hold hearings to examine the potential impact of the presidential election and the impending state budget process on the City of Philadelphia's financial condition.

Immediately following the public hearing, a meeting of the Committee on Fiscal Stability and Intergovernmental Cooperation, open to the public, will be held to consider the action to be taken on the above listed item.

Copies of the foregoing item are available in the Office of the Chief Clerk of the Council, Room 402, City Hall.

Michael Decker
Chief Clerk

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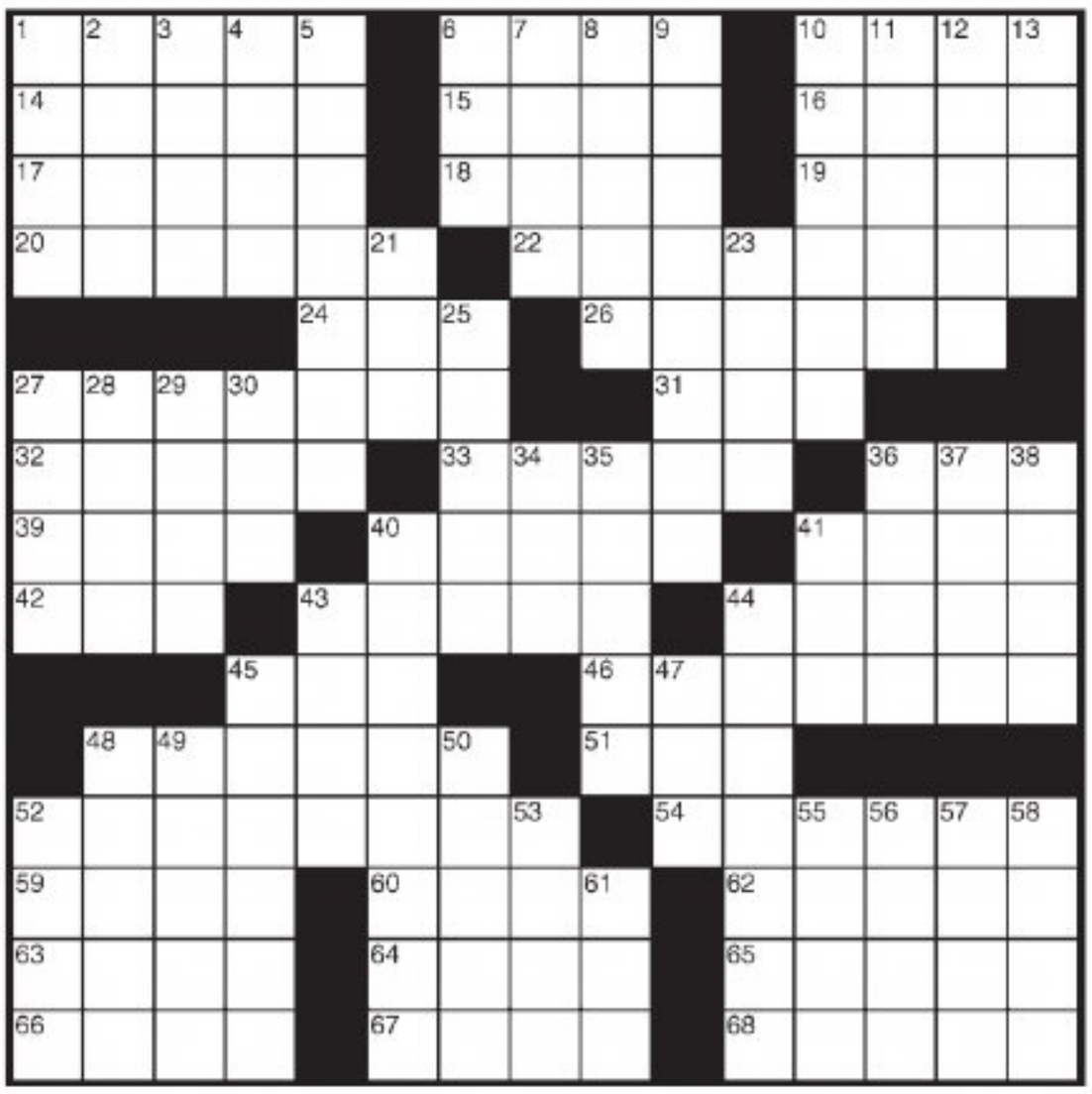
metro.us/crossword

Across
1 Sales goal
6 Military cap
10 Kind of film
14 Al of Indy fame
15 Out loud
16 Bombay nanny
17 Lazybones
18 Tablet
19 Gael republic
20 Skyrocketed
22 Ambassador, e.g.
24 Nagano honorific
26 Furtive
27 Retract, as claws
31 Thole filler
32 Climb the –
33 Up and about
36 Playing-card spot
39 WWW addresses
40 Fierce whales
41 Descartes' name
42 Geol. formations
43 Soul or folk
44 Chili-pepper dip
45 Casino action
46 Some printers
48 Tribal burial sites
51 – kwon do
52 Provisions
54 Nasal accents
59 Perplexed
60 Variety
62 Praise to the skies
63 Skinny
64 High spirits
65 Song-and-dance show
66 Coastal flyer
67 New Year's Eve word
68 Lie dormant

Down
1 Quickie exam
2 Reverse
3 Nobel Prize city
4 Bristle with
5 Collars
6 Keystone Konstable
7 A Great Lake
8 Where to find dates
9 Prairie state
10 Rubicon crosser
11 Kayak's kin
12 Curly's colleague
13 – went thataway!
21 Morse click
23 Use a branding iron
25 Narrows the gap
27 Crawled, perhaps
28 "B.C." cartoonist
29 Plumbing bends
30 Hirt and Pacino
34 Chem. or bio.
35 Implied
36 Volcano goddess
37 Technical sch.
38 Potpie veggies
40 Makes obsolete
41 Sahib's rule
43 What's cooking
44 Kebab holders
45 Lighter fluid
47 "Unforgettable" singer
48 Cheapskate
49 Tuna habitat
50 With cunning
52 Glen
53 Bridge
55 Eddie's cop character
56 Wheel hub
57 Stick together
58 Footfall
61 Capt.'s heading



metro.us/sudoku

easy

		6		9				8
		2	7					
	5		3		6		2	
		8	1	2				4
	4		8		5		3	
1				7	4	6		
	9		5		2		1	
					9	3		
3				1		9		

hard

	1		8				2	9
	5	2	4		7			
8			2			7		
		9				3		8
	2			7			4	
5		3				9		
		6			2			1
			7		5	6	9	
9	8				4		3	

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries Express your thoughts and offer suggestions. You will capture interest and impress someone who can influence your future. Partnerships look promising.

Taurus A business meeting will go well if you listen to what's being said. Once you grasp the magnitude of the conversation, add positive, unique suggestions.

Gemini Put everything you've got into getting ahead. Use your intellect to draw attention to what you want to see unfold and you will have a captive audience.

Cancer You'll be torn between professional and personal responsibilities. Look for a unique way to satisfy both yourself and the people counting on you.

Leo Stop contemplating and start engaging in the ventures that excite you. Personal gains, travel and physical indulgence look appealing as well as rewarding.

Virgo Try to stay on course. Falling behind will result in complaints from someone who can be demanding. Put your money in a safe place to avoid overspending.

Libra Look for changes that will make your life better. Evaluate your current situation. Size things up, and figure out how you can attain the happiness you desire.

Scorpio Problems with communication can be expected if you revealed too much information to someone you thought you could trust. Damage control will be necessary.

Sagittarius Get out there and have fun today. Participate in any activity that will align you with like-minded people or valuable colleagues. Be a team player.

Capricorn Stop in your tracks before you make a mistake. Don't follow the leader when you should be the leader. Making impulsive decisions will set you back.

Aquarius A chance to make a financial move is best thought through carefully. Don't let your emotions or romantic partner influence an important decision. You cannot buy love.

Pisces Your luck is changing, and good fortune is heading in your direction. Reconnect with someone you have enjoyed working or playing with in the past. EUGENIA LAST

Yesterday's answers

S	C	A	M	■	V	S	O	P	■	A	S	T	E	R
E	A	V	E	■	E	T	T	A	■	S	C	O	R	E
A	P	E	X	■	N	U	T	S	■	K	R	I	L	L
M	E	R	I	T	E	D	■	O	R	I	O	L	E	S
■	■	■	C	R	E	S	T	■	O	N	O	■	■	■
A	F	F	A	I	R	■	S	N	U	G	G	L	E	S
B	O	R	N	E	■	S	U	E	T	■	E	U	R	O
B	R	A	■	S	P	A	N	I	E	L	■	R	O	B
O	T	I	S	■	U	R	A	L	■	A	S	I	D	E
T	E	L	E	G	R	A	M	■	K	I	N	D	E	R
■	■	■	E	Y	E	■	I	N	U	R	E	■	■	■
W	A	S	T	R	E	L	■	O	B	S	E	R	V	E
O	M	A	H	A	■	I	N	T	L	■	R	E	A	D
R	O	G	E	T	■	F	I	C	A	■	E	T	N	A
E	R	A	S	E	■	E	L	H	I	■	D	E	E	M

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